

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 ACDA-10 AID-05 EB-08 COME-00 OMB-01

TRSE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SS-15 SSM-05 IO-13 /089 W

-----271454 066580 /42

R 271340Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7432

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS JIDDA 1560

USIA FOR IOP/M

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, SA

SUBJECT: SAUDI PRESS EDITORIALS ON THE US PEACE INITIATIVE AND

AID BY THE OIL RICH ARAB STATES TO THE CONFRONTATION STATES

1. THE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF EDITORIALS WHICH APPEARED IN THE FEBRUARY 26 ISSUE OF THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE JIDDA DAILY ARAB NEWS ON THE SUBJECTS OF THE US PEACE INITIATIVE AND AID GIVEN BY RICH ARAB STATES TO THE POORER.

BEGIN TEXT:

2. "NO MIRACLES". IF CYRUS VANCE WAS THE PATIENT LISTENER ON HIS RECENT RECONNAISSANCE TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST, HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO BE THE HARD-NOSED NEGOTIATOR WHEN HE RETURNS TO THE AREA IN JUNE. NO ONE EXPECTED MIRACLES FROM UNCLASSIFIED

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THE U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE'S FIRST VISIT TO ISRAEL AND THE ARAB COUNTRIES. THE ARABS ARE WELL AWARE THAT UNTIL ISRAEL HAS HELD ITS GENERAL ELECTIONS IN MAY, NO SUBSTANTIVE DECISION-MAKING IS LIKELY TO RESULT FROM ANY PEACE EFFORTS IN THE REGION. THE FIRST HALF OF 1977 IS DESTINED TO BE A TIME OF TALK, NOT ACTION. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS GRADUALLY LEARNING THE INTERNATIONAL ROPES AND BY SUMMER

SHOULD BE INFORMED AND EXPERIENCED ENOUGH TO SECURE A RETURN TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. THE ARABS ARE STILL TANG-
LING WITH THE PROBLEM OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA,
AND PERHAPS BY JUNE OR JULY WILL COME UP WITH A FORMULA
ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES. THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGAN-
IZATION IS AGONIZING OVER HOW FAR IT SHOULD COMPROMISE TO
SECURE A WEST BANK-GAZA STATE. AND ISRAEL, BESET WITH ECON-
OMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHAOS, IS TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER
IT WANTS PEACE AFTER ALL.

IF 1977 IS TO BE THE YEAR OF A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT,
ALL OF THESE OBSTACLES WILL HAVE TO BE HURDLED BY THIS
SUMMER. MR. VANCE WILL RETURN IN JUNE TO KEEP UP THE MOMEN-
TUM, BUT HE WILL HAVE TO SETTLE DOWN TO SOME HARD BARGAINING,
OR AMERICA WILL HAVE LOST THE INITIATIVE. PRESIDENT CARTER'S
UPCOMING MEETINGS WITH ARAB LEADERS, SHOULD HELP RESOLVE SOME
OF THE PROBLEMS, BUT THE REAL ROADBLOCK IS ON THE ROAD TO
TEL AVIV, AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE UNITED
STATES HAS THE RESOLVE TO TACKLE IT.

3. "THORNY QUESTION". ONE OF THE TABOOS OF INTER-ARAB
POLITICS IS AID FROM THE RICHER ARAB STATES TO THE SO-CALLED
CONFRONTATION STATES. AS THE FORMER FEEL THEY ARE PAYING
MORE THAN THEY SHOULD AND THE LATTER THAT THEY ARE RECEIVING
LESS THAN THEY DESERVE, THE JOB OF DRAWING THE LINE BETWEEN
HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH HAS ALWAYS BEEN THANKLESS AND RISKY. SO
WE RISK A THANKLESS EDITORIAL FOLLOWING A DAMASCUS NEWSPAPER
COMMENT THAT THE ARAB OIL PRODUCERS HAVE LEFT THE CONFRON-
TATION STATES HANGING ON A LIMB AND A RESTRAINED KUWAITI
REPLY THAT KUWAIT "HAS RENDERED ALL TYPES OF ASSISTANCE TO
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CONFRONTATION STATES." TO CLEAR UP ONE POINT AT
ONCE, IT MUST BE NOTED THAT KUWAIT'S RESPONSE INDICATES ITS
REALIZATION THAT MANY COMPLAINTS BY THE CONFRONTATION STATES
IN RECENT MONTHS HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY DIRECTED AGAINST IT,
RATHER THAN SUCH COUNTRIES AS SAUDI ARABIA, QATAR OR THE
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. . . .

BECAUSE THE SUBJECT IS MONEY--A TOPIC THAT CANNOT BE
PUBLICLY AIRED BY ARAB BROTHERS, MOST OF THE CONTROVERSY
HAS GONE ON QUIETLY. THE SYRIAN DECISION TO BRING IT OUT
INTO THE OPEN AT THIS MOMENT MAY BE LINKED TO THE CURRENT
TALKS IN VARIOUS ARAB CAPITALS TO GIVE EGYPT ADDITIONAL
AID TO OVERCOME ITS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAKE OF
THE FOOD RIOTS OF JANUARY. SYRIA FEARS THAT IT WILL BE
LEFT OUT. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE, HOWEVER, HOW SYRIA CAN
GET MORE. FIRST, DAMASCUS POLICY SINCE ITS MILITARY INTER-
VENTION IN LEBANON LAST YEAR IS HIGHLY UNPOPULAR WITH THE
OTHER ARABS AND WHILE THIS IS NOT ENOUGH CAUSE TO CUT AID,
IT CERTAINLY RELIEVES THE DONORS OF THE POPULAR PRESSURES TO
PAY MORE. SECOND, CONDITIONS IN SYRIA OR IN JORDAN (WHICH

DID NOT EVEN FIGHT THE LAST WAR WITH ISRAEL) ARE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN EGYPT. EGYPT IS SUFFERING FROM A TERRIBLE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND ONLY VAST ARAB AID CAN PULL IT THROUGH. WHILE SYRIA FACES NO SUCH PROBLEM. IN FACT, COUNTRIES LIKE KUWAIT MAY ARGUE THAT IF SYRIA DOES HAVE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, THEY ARE PARTLY TO BE BLAMED ON THE EXPENSIVE INTERVENTION IN LEBANON--ACTION THAT A COUNTRY LIKE KUWAIT, WITH A LARGE PALESTINIAN POPULATION, WOULD BE MOST DISINCLINED TO SUPPORT.

THE ARABS--SYRIA, KUWAIT AND ALL OF US--MUST NOT ALLOW THE SUBJECT OF MORE OR LESS AID TO HARM THE NEWLY RESTORED ARAB UNITY. ANY DISPUTE CAN BE THRASHED OUT IN A CONFERENCE ROOM AND SETTLED. BUT THE WAY TO THE CONFERENCE ROOM DOES NOT PASS THROUGH NEWSPAPER PAGES. END TEXT.
PORTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977JIDDA01560
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770068-0164
Format: TEL
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977025/aaaaaebs.tel
Line Count: 130
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f9e3f5c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Oct-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3340650
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAUDI PRESS EDITORIALS ON THE US PEACE INITIATIVE AND AID BY THE OIL RICH ARAB STATES TO THE CONFRONTATION STATES
TAGS: PFOR, EAID, SA, XF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f9e3f5c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009